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The Last Hope

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THE LAST HOPE

PROLOGUE

(To be recited by a brave in full war gear.)

In the valley of the Big Horn,
In the year of fertile harvests,
Came a plague that sat upon it,
As a vulture in the treetops,
Came and sat aloft and waited.
All our people felt its presence,
Felt the woe to come upon them.

In this year no men took maidens
As their wives; there were no children,
For the redman faced destruction,
Saw his race would be extinguished
By the white man and his weapons.

It is natural that my people
Thought of vengeance and of bloodshed.
Then the Sitting Bull, our chieftain,
Spoke some words unto the people
That were soft and very pleasing
To a people who love freedom,—
Freedom, life and love and laughter,
Laughter of the soul, not merely that which
shows upon men's faces.

These are his own words, in substance,
I will go to the white father,
Tell him of our many troubles,
With his braves and their strong weapons,
Ask him if he will not take them,
From our land to pitch their tepees,
In some other fertile valley.
On the morrow I go thither.
In the meantime, let my warriors
Have no dealings with the white man,
Shed no blood, cause no disaster,
Till I come again among you.
We must do what we do carefully,
We must all well heed our action.
Let us make no leap in blindness.

Exeunt.

ACT I

Cast of Characters

Col. Tom Custer, in command of detail for the capture of Rain-in-the-face.

1. "Yellowstone Kelly," scout and hunter.
2. Charley Reynolds, scout.
3. George Sanger, enlisted adventurer.
4. Perfect!, scout.
5. Curley, Crow Indian employed by the government as a scout.
6. Rain-in-the-face.

(These five picked men to capture Rain-in-the-face.)

Rain-in-the-face An Unapapa chief, who has killed two white men.

Long Tongue, Sioux warrior, friend to Rain-in-the-face and a fiery orator.

Wanda, half-breed Indian girl, daughter of Kelley.
Red Hawk, young Indian brave.

ACT I

BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT AGENCY

Rain-in-the-face Meets Long Tongue

Long Tongue:

Uh, my brother, I have told you,
That the white man seeks your capture,
That your boast is known unto them,
That their men come here to catch you.
Is it well you walk forth boldly?
It is not, you know that surely.

Rain-in-the-face:

But, my friend, I fear not white men.

Long Tongue:

Yes I know you fear not white men,
But I beg you to be careful.

Rain-in-the-face:

They have come I hear to get me,
For the murder of their people
Which I did in their own vision.
Why then should I fear them greatly?

I will go and look upon them,
See what manhood shows their faces.
Come with me and see these warriors,
That come here to take a chieftain.

ACT I

SCENE TWO

(The interior of the Government Agency.)

Enter, Long Tongue and Rain-in-the-face with their blankets pulled close around their faces.

In the background Colonel Custer, and his four white men and one Indian, Kelly, Reynolds, Sanger, "Perfect", and Curley the Indian. Rain-in-the-face begins to barter furs for powder and ball. Custer gets behind him and pinions his arm. Rain-in-the-face gives a war cry, but before his warriors come he is tied and the braves are met at the door by Custer's rifles.

Colonel Custer:

Halt! You warriors of this chieftain.
I have with me but a few men.
You can easily o'erecome them,
But 'tis well you do not try it,
For we now are followed closely
By a mighty band of warriors,
Who are coming here to meet you,
And to give you many presents.
We have taken this your chieftain—
We shall give him only justice.
Go apart and speak together.
Come again and speak unto me.

Exeunt.

(Some time intervenes.)

Re-enter Long Tongue and the braves.

Long Tongue:

I speak to the white man's chieftain,
For the council of the red men,
He, our chieftain, must go with you,
But I must go with him also,
As his friend and his companion.
Does the white man understand me?

Colonel Custer:

You are clear enough unto me,
And you may come with us, Long Tongue.

"Yellowstone Kelly":

Damn this sneaking red skin reptile;
Damn his people 'fore and backward;
This is but a plot for mischief;
He will hatch some hell up shortly,
This fond friend and good companion,
I would never take him with me.

Rain-in-the-face:

Custer, you shall pay a forfeit.
You shall lose your life in payment,
For these bonds you place upon me.
I shall take from out your bosom
Your own heart to make my vengeance
Felt among your blood and kindred.
I shall take one bite from out it;
Feed it to the beasts and vultures,
As the weasel feeds them daily.

Colonel Custer:

Such a speech is very fitting
For a creature of your sort,
Now to horse we must go thither.

Exeunt.

(Wanda and Red Hawk go away together.)

ACT I

SCENE THREE

(A wood ravine by the river.)

Red Hawk:

Look above you carefully, Wanda;
See that magpie looking at you.
You have something that he covets,
It is but your red hair ribbon,
That he wants to tear to pieces.
They are saucy birds, these magpies.

Wanda:

They are saucy and destructive;
I have seen them take a lily
That was growing on the prairie,
To their nests where they would tear it
into pieces fine as sawdust,

Also time and time again
I've seen them,
When perchance they were molested,
Fly in rage at the offender,
Peek and drive him from that region.

They are cruel, too; I've seen them
Eat alive some poor old buffalo,
In the spring when he was shedding,
And his back was sore from frost bite.
I have heard they talk like people,
Think you there is truth in such a statement?

Red Hawk:

I know not but if that fellow could do talking,
He would say what I am feeling;
That the sun ne'er shown so brightly,
That the flowers ne'er had such fragrance
As when you walk forth to see them.
He would say that such a maiden
Never elsewhere trod the prairie,
Never one who smiled as you do,
Never one whose bosom folded,
Such a love of all God's creatures.
Wanda, you are all that could be wished
In a woman of the prairie.

Wanda:

I have called the magpie saucy,
Called him bold and very daring,
And perhaps if he were speaking
He might make such foolish statements.
But we'll say no more about them.
Let us now go to the village.

Red Hawk:

We shall not go to the village
'Till I tell you what you well know
Is now hidden in my bosom,
Is it this that makes you blush so?
Tell me, Wanda, do you love me?

Wanda:

I am young to talk of loving,
But for you I have a feeling,
That I do not have for others.
Red Hawk, let us speak no farther
For the present on this subject.

Red Hawk:

Very well, at present, Wanda,
But sometime, out in the future,
I shall once again speak to you.

Curtain.

ACT II

Cast of Characters

Sitting Bull, high rank among the chiefs.
Rain-in-the-face, chief.
Two Moon, another chief.
Red Hawk, common warrior.
Night Wind, common warrior.
Spotted Horse, common warrior.
Mad Horse, common warrior.
Many other warriors.

SCENE ONE

Eighteen months intervene, in which time Rain-in-the-face escapes from the Federal prison by the help of Long Tongue.

Council fire and warriors around it.

Sitting Bull:

I have come to you, my brethren,
From the home of the white father,
From the land of the great tepees,
From the land far toward the sunrise.

The white father made me welcome,
When I made my visit to him.
He has made me many presents,
He has given me much eating.

I have asked him why his warriors
Come now to our far-off country—
Come with weapons like we have not—
Come with weapons of the devil.
He has given me no answer.

Is our Father, the Great Spirit,
Willing we should be extinguished,
Willing for our homes' destruction?
Shall we leave our father's country,
Leave their graves and leave our wigwams
To these greedy, grasping, white men?
No! We yet have mighty warriors,
Men of valor, men of wisdom,

Men who love their homes and children,
Men who love these grounds to hunt in,
For the bison and the beaver,
For the antelope and coyote.
Shall we fight, or meet destruction?
It is open to the council.

(Silence for some time.)

Rain-in-the-face:

I have heard your words, O Chieftain,
Heard them with a heart o'erflowing
With a murmured prayer for vengeance.
Let us strike like a great serpent.
Strike a coiling blow about them.
Let them all come here and perish.
Then my blood will be enriched
By the heart blood of another.
I have given you my feeling.
I have told you how I take it.
That is all. I have now finished.

(Silence.)

Sitting Bull:

Two Moon, say you nothing to us?
Give us no hint of your feeling?

Two Moon:

I have heard the other speaking,
Of his earnest prayers for vengeance,
Of the heart blood of another.
I like not these private reasons
For a war with a great nation.

Sitting Bull:

We have heard the chiefs' expression,
What their feelings are about it.
Let us now hear from the warriors;
They the ones who fight the battles.
Red Hawk, will you not speak to us?
Give us how you feel about it.

Red Hawk:

I have known the white man's chieftain,
He whose eyes are blue as heaven,
And whose hair is like the sunshine
As it shines upon the prairie
In the pleasant autumn season.

I have loved him and his warriors.
Yet, my brethren, I am for it.
I will fight the white man with you.

Night Wind:

Red Hawk speaks of love of white men.
I speak of a love of kinsmen,
Of a love of home and country,
Of a love of wives and sweethearts.
Is not now our blood much thicker,
Than the narrow stream of water,
That brings out these warriors to us?
These same white men drove our fathers
From their homes, and from their country,
Killed their squaws and their papooses.
None can say the Night Wind murmurs,
With an idle tongue a falsehood.
It is true as I have said it
They have wronged our homes and women.
It is not enough to slay them.
They should die in dreadful torment.
I will help to bring them to it.

Sitting Bull:

Are there not more words unspoken?
Is our language all for fighting?
Have we men to plan our battles?
Shall we fight or lie in ambush?
Let us hear words on these subjects.

Red Hawk:

If we fight let us fight bravely,
Let us make no ambush for them,
Let us fight like the Great Spirit
Wishes men to fight each other.
It is true we love our sweethearts,
They in turn do love their's also.
Why and wherefore should we kill them,
As the catamount or panther
Kills the timid wood deer?
I have seen the white man's sweethearts,
Seen their mothers, wives, and children,
Seen the love they bear each other.
It were well if unto others
We should do as we'd be done by.

Spotted Horse:

Ah! our friend, the Red Hawk, speaketh,
Speaketh of the wives and sweethearts,
Of the mothers, and the children,
Of these men who come out to us,
With their eyes upon our country.
It is well he speaks so softly,
That his words are given credence
Only as the words of lovers.
He, we may say, has good eyesight,
And his brain lacks nought for women,
But in war he is a failure.

Red Hawk:

It is true I love the white men.
That my sweetheart is a half-breed
Is well known to all my people;
That her father is a white man,
Also is well known among them,
That he fights the white man's battles,
Is well for the white man's safety.

Mad Horse:

Let us stop this petty wrangling.
It befits not our brave warriors.
It is well I have not spoken,
For I have been thinking deeply
There is little time for talking,
There is not enough for planning.
In a council of such numbers.
We have heard the men's own feelings.
Let them leave the rest to chieftains—
Men who know the plans of warfare.
Does this meet with your approval?

Spotted Horse:

I am sure we feel like Mad Horse.
Let the chiefs that here assemble,
Be the ones to plan our battle.
Let us now go to our wigwams,
Spend the night in peaceful slumber.
We will need strength on the morrow.

All:

It is good; let us go thither.

Exeunt all except chiefs.
(*Silence.*)

Red-in-the-face :

Red Hawk speaks to us of valor,
The Great Spirit's way of warfare.
These same words are credit to him,
But in them is no discretion.
These, our foes, have powerful weapons,
That we cannot hope to cope with,
In a pitched and open battle.
Therefore, we must make an ambush,
There is for us no alternative,
There is but one way to victory.
On that there is no discussion.
Sitting Bull, do you not think so?

Sitting Bull :

In your words there is good logic,
But to kill without a warning
Is a grievous undertaking.
This, however, gets us nowhere
In the planning of our battle.
I believe we must make ambush
In the valley of the Big Horn.
They will probably come up that way.
I have heard a great deal lately
Of a Savior to our nation
To be sent from the Great Spirit.
He will rid us then forever,
Of the white man and his weapons,
Give us back our moose and buffalo,
Give us back our lands to hunt in.
Let us make a prayer unto Him.

THE PRAYER

O, our Father, the Great Spirit,
Give us now Thine ear a moment,
That we all may plead for guidance,
In our battle on the morrow.
I, who am on earth a chieftain,
Plead before Thee for my people.
Give us now our rightful vengeance,
That we all may praise Thee ever.
We Thy children love not bloodshed,
But our homes have been demolished.
We must have Thy help to conquer.
Give us then Thine own assistance,
That the white man may go from us,
And may never more molest us.

Give us strength, we pray, O Father,
That to them we show no mercy,
For their lives are now a forfeit
To the wrongs they heap upon us.
We are Thine, Thou must defend us,
And we leave it all unto Thee.

(Silence for some time.)

Two-Moon :

It is settled that we fight them
In ambush by the river?
We must make our plans minutely.
Make a plan and work unto it.
There is never any method
That succeeds so well as this one.

(Curtain.)

ACT III

Cast of Characters

Col. Tom Custer.
General Custer.
Kelly.
Red Hawk.
Many Indians in the battle.
Squaws.
Soldiers, etc.

ACT III

SCENE ONE

Stage Setting, Valley of the Big Horn.

A large valley with a small oval hill in the middle. The time is early morning just as the sun is rising. On the hills surrounding the valley can be seen many Indians. Soon in the distance can be heard sounds of cavalry coming. The Indians all disappear and in a few minutes the advance guard comes upon the scene, followed by the rest of the soldiers in a short time. There are two pieces of artillery brought upon the stage by the soldiers. Soldiers and guns progress to the left of the knoll when suddenly they are fired upon from all sides. The bugle blows assembly and then a charge which is repulsed by the Indians. The white men retreat to the top of the knoll, where Custer calls a council of his scouts, among whom is Kelly.

Kelly:

Here we are in deadly ambush.
If we stay here we are finished.

General Custer:

Yes, we know we're in an ambush—
That, a man can see unaided.
But now, Kelly, there is Reno,
Coming by this way tomorrow.
Let us stay and drive these devils
To their graves, and their destruction.
We can hold a day against them.

Kelly:

That is true, but where is Reno?
Are you sure that he is coming?
If he comes, then all is righted;
But if not, our hours are numbered,
If we stay to fight them singly.
If we use the piece upon them
And then follow at full gallop
We can go with but slight losses.
We can then join unto Reno
And come back and purge these prairies
Of these varmints and their children.

General Custer:

Reno comes here on the morrow.
Let us wait for reinforcements.
Take your pieces to the hilltop,
Place their backs toward one another,
And lay low and let these villains
Come and see their master's faces,
If they can, and if they cannot,
Let us blow them into pieces.
To your guns and get to business.

Kelly:

O, my General, is this wisdom?
Is it safe to take such chances?
Can we not go unto Reno
And come back again more safely?

General Custer (cutting in sharply):

Go, I say, and get the pieces
On the hilltop. No more talking.

ACT III

SCENE TWO

(Same stage setting as in one, except guns on hill-top.)

The soldiers crowd around the guns, or singly lie in the grass. Now the battle begins in earnest. The Indians ride in an ever narrowing circle, and one falls from his horse occasionally with a savage yell. The white men also fall one by one until there are but a few men left. Custer falls and Kelly assumes command. Kelly rides from one group of soldiers to another shouting commands and encouragement. His horse is shot under him. He now runs back and forth. He meets Red Hawk, who recognizes him and helps him to escape. Kelly grabs a blanket from a dead Indian, also other articles of dress and kneels and rubs his face against that of the dead Indian to get the paint upon his own face. In so doing he gets blood upon his hands, which he rubs upon his blankets. Catching a loose pony he mounts and begins to ride the circle, too.

Rain-in-the-face is now seen to dismount from his horse and stooping over a dead man uses his knife for a while and then raises with a human heart in his hand, from which he takes a bite. He then mounts and rides away with the heart held high in the air. The battle has come to a close, and just as the sun is setting the squaws come upon the field for the scalps.

ACT IV

Cast of Characters

Kelly.

Red Hawk.

Wanda.

Priest, who marries the couple.

Numerous guests at the wedding.

ACT IV

SCENE ONE

Stage Setting, Indian Camp.

Enter Red Hawk and Kelly.

Red Hawk:

I must ask you, O my father,
As a man e'er asks another,

For a favor.
I have loved your Wanda greatly,
Long and fiercely have I loved her,
For her beauty and her graces.
For her soul I feel deep longing.
It is not of lust or passion
That I think as I come to you,
But of love, as pure and spotless,
As the great white snow shoe rabbit,
As he sits upon a snowdrift
In the very dead of winter.
I have found that she, too, loves me.
May I have her and be blessed,
As no man was blessed before me?

Kelly:

You have done me a great service.
You now have my girl in payment
And she's yours if she will have you.
When shall we prepare your wedding?

Red Hawk:

I've waited moons in silence.
I have loved the maiden deeply.
Let us do our work now quickly.
In one half moon I'd be wedded,
If it can be done in that time.

Kelly:

It not only can but shall be,
Let us now go, unto Wanda.

(Curtain.)

ACT IV

SCENE TWO

In front of a cabin. Wanda sitting on the door stone. Enter Kelly and Red Hawk. Wanda springs to her feet and runs to embrace Red Hawk first. Then turns to her father.

Wanda:

Father, this is Red Hawk, my beloved,
Who has come, I think, to ask you
For your daughter's hand in marriage.
Is that not the very reason
That you come unto our cabin?

Red Hawk:

No, I have already asked him,
And he says that he is willing.
Wanda, daughter of the prairie,
You are mine from this time forward.
Let us now be married quickly.

Wanda:

O, my father, can it be so?
Can you let me have this Indian?
You who hate them all so greatly.
Is it true that I'm to have him?

Kelly:

It is true; his skin is coppered;
But his heart is white as mine is.
Yes, I think it is much whiter.
Wanda, now prepare your wedding.

Enters the cabin and leaves Red Hawk and Wanda alone.

Wanda:

Red Hawk, how did you overcome him?
You must tell me all about it.

Red Hawk:

I just asked him,
He consented.

Wanda:

That's not all, oh please go farther.

Red Hawk:

That is all there was about it.
Let us now plan for our wedding.

Wanda and Red Hawk walk over and sit down upon a log. Red Hawk slips his arm about Wanda.
(Curtain.)

ACT IV

SCENE THREE

Stage setting same as in Scene Two, except that there are a number of benches in front of the cabin.

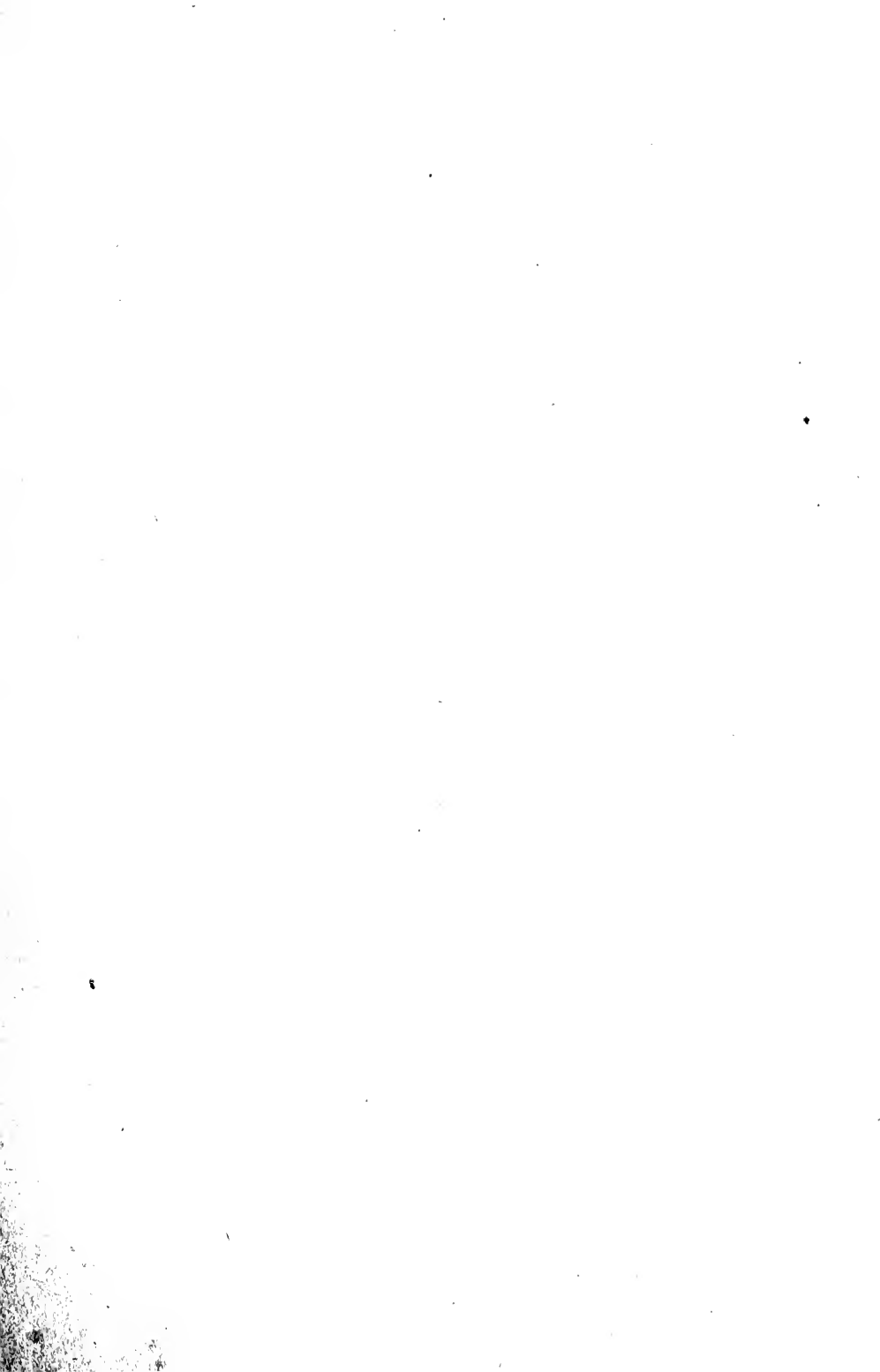
The guests begin to assemble and one by one take their seats upon the benches. White men and Indians are both present. They sit in silence, for the

most part, as is the Indian custom. The priest arrives on horseback and ties his horse. He enters the cabin. Again silence settles on the people outside. Then the priest appears, and is followed shortly by Wanda and Red Hawk, also Kelly.

Wanda and Red Hawk stand on the doorstep side by side as the ceremony begins. The priest uses the Catholic ceremony.

As Wanda and Red Hawk rise, Red Hawk kisses Wanda. The ceremony is over and a lunch of buffalo hump, bread and coffee is served. Also a small drink of whisky is given each guest. Coffee and whisky are great treats to these people. Now the pipe is smoked and the guests go to their homes, leaving Wanda and Red Hawk to themselves. As each Indian passes them he says, "How" in expression of his thanks. Wanda and Red Hawk seat themselves on a log.

(Curtain.)



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